The TATLER.

By *Isaac Bickerstaff* Esq;

Pronaq; cum spectant Animalia cætera Terram,
Os Homini sublime dedit, Cœlumq; tueri
Jussit. Ovick Met.

From *Thursday December* 15. to *Saturday December* 17. 1709.

Sheer-Lane, December 16.

IT is not to be imagined, how great an Effect well-disposed Lights, with proper Forms and Orders in Assemblies, have upon some Tempers. I am sure I feel it in so extraordinary a Manner, that I cannot, in a Day or Two, get out of my Imagination any very beautiful or disagreable Impression which I receive on such Occasions. For this Reason I frequently look in at the Playhouse, in order to enlarge my Thoughts, and furnish my Mind with some new Ideas, that may be serviceable to me in my Lucubrations. In this Disposition I entered the Theatre the other Day, and placed my self in a Corner of it, very convenient for seeing, without being my self observed. I found the Audience hushed in a very deep Attention, and did not question but some noble Tragedy was just then in its Crisis, or that an Incident was to be unravelled which would determine the Fate of an Hero. While I was in this Suspence, expecting every Moment to see my old Friend Mr. *Betterton* appear in all the Majesty of Distress, to my unspeakable Amazement, there came up a Monster with a Face between his Feet; and as I was looking on, he raised himself on one Leg in such a perpendicular Posture, that the other grew in a direct Line above his Head. It afterwards twisted it self into the Motions and Wreathings of several different Animals, and after great Variety of Shapes and Transformations, went off the Stage in the Figure of an human Creature. The Admiration, the Applause, the Satisfaction, of the Audience, during this strange Entertainment, is not to be expressed. I was very much out of Countenance for my dear Countrymen, and looked about with some Apprehension for Fear any Foreigner should be present. Is it possible (thought I) that human Nature can rejoice in its Disgrace, and take Pleasure in seeing its own Figure turned to Ridicule, and distorted into Forms that raise Horror and Aversion? There is something disingenuous and immoral in the being able to bear such a Sight. Men of elegant and noble Minds, are shocked at seeing the Characters of Persons who deserve Esteem for their Virtue, Knowledge, or Services to their Country, placed in wrong Lights, and by Misrepresentation made the Subject of Buffoonry. Such a nice Abhorrence is not indeed to be found among the Vulgar; but methinks it is wonderful, that those who have nothing but the outward Figure to distinguish them as Men, should delight in seeing it abused, vilified, and disgraced.

I must confess, there is nothing that more pleases me, in all that I read in Books, or see among Mankind, than such Passages as represent human Nature in its proper Dignity. As Man is a Creature made up of different Extremes, he has something in him very great and very mean: A skilful Artist may draw an excellent Picture of him in either of these Views. The finest Authors of Antiquity have taken him on the more advantagious Side. They cultivate the natural Grandeur of the Soul, raise in her a generous Ambition, feed her with Hopes of Immortality and Perfection, and do all they can to widen the Partition between the Virtuous and the Vicious, by making the Difference betwixt them as great as betwixt Gods and Brutes. In short, it is impossible to read a Page in *Plato*, *Tully*, and a Thousand other antient Moralists, without being a greater and a better Man for it. On the contrary, I could never read any of our modish *French* Authors, or those of our own Country who are the Imitators and Admirers of that trifling Nation, without being for some Time out of Humour with my self, and at every Thing about me. Their Business is, to depreciate human Nature, and consider it under its worst Appearances. They give mean Interpretations and base Motives to the worthiest Actions. They resolve Virtue and Vice into Constitution. In short, they endeavour to make no Distinction between Man and Man, or between the Species of Men and that of Brutes. As an Instance of this kind of Authors, among many others, let any one examine the celebrated *Rochefaucault*, who is the great Philosopher for administring Consolation to the Idle, the Envious, and worthless Part of Mankind.

I remember a young Gentleman of moderate Understanding, but great Vivacity, who by dipping into many Authors of this Nature, had got a little Smattering of Knowledge, just enough to make an Atheist or a Free-thinker, but not a Philosopher or a Man of Sense. With these Accomplishments, he went to visit his Father in the Country, who was a plain, rough, honest Man, and wise, tho' not learned. The Son, who took all Opportunities to show his Learning, began to establish a new Religion in the Family, and to enlarge the Narrowness of their Country Notions; in which he succeeded so well, that he had reduced the Butler by his Table-Talk, and staggered his eldest Sister. The old Gentleman began to be alarmed at the Schisms that arose among his Children, but did not yet believe his Son's Doctrine to be so pernicious as it really was, till one Day talking of his Setting-Dog, the Son said, He did not question but *Trey* was as immortal as any one of the Family; and in the Heat of the Argument told his Father, That for his own Part, he expected to die like a Dog. Upon which the old Man, starting up in a very great Passion, cried out, Then, Sirrah, you shall live like one; and taking his Cane in his Hand, cudgelled him out of his System. This had so good an Effect upon him, that he took up from that Day, fell to reading good Books, and is now a Bencher in the *Middle-Temple*.

I do not mention this Cudgelling Part of the Story with a Design to engage the secular Arm in Matters of this Nature; but certainly, if it ever exerts it self in Affairs of Opinion and Speculation, it ought to do it on such shallow and despicable Pretenders to Knowledge, who endeavour to give Man dark and uncomfortable Prospects of his Being, and destroy those Principles which are the Support, Happiness, and Glory, of all publick Societies, as well as private Persons.

I think it is one of *Pythagoras*'s golden Sayings, *That a Man should take Care above all Things to have*

a due

a due Respect for himself: And it is certain, that this licentious Sort of Authors, who are for depreciating Mankind, endeavour to disappoint and undo what the most refined Spirits have been labouring to advance since the Beginning of the World. The very Design of Dress, Good-breedings, outward Ornaments, and Ceremony, were to lift up human Nature, and set it off to an Advantage. Architecture, Painting, and Statuary, were invented with the same Design; as indeed every Art and Science contributes to the Embellishment of Life, and to the wearing off or throwing into Shades the mean and low Parts of our Nature. Poetry carries on this great End more than all the rest, as may be seen in the following Passage, taken out of Sir *Francis Bacon*'s *Advancement of Learning*, which gives a truer and better Account of this Art than all the Volumes that were ever written upon it.

'Poetry, especially Heroical, seems to be raised 'altogether from a noble Foundation, which makes 'much for the Dignity of Man's Nature. For 'seeing this sensible World is in Dignity inferior 'to the Soul of Man, Poesy seems to endow human Nature with that which History denies; 'and to give Satisfaction to the Mind, with at least 'the Shadow of Things, where the Substance cannot be had. For if the Matter be throughly considered, a strong Argument may be drawn from 'Poesy, that a more stately Greatness of Things, 'a more perfect Order, and a more beautiful Variety, delights the Soul of Man, than any Way 'can be found in Nature since the Fall. Wherefore seeing the Acts and Events, which are the 'Subject of true History, are not of that Amplitude 'as to content the Mind of Man; Poesy is ready at 'Hand to feign Acts more Heroical. Because true 'History reports the Successes of Business not proportionable to the Merit of Virtues and Vices, 'Poesy corrects it, and presents Events and Fortunes according to Desert, and according to the 'Law of Providence: Because true History, thro' 'the frequent Satiety and Similitude of Things, 'works a Distast and Misprision in the Mind of 'Man, Poesy cheareth and refresheth the Soul, 'chanting Things rare and various, and full of 'Vicissitudes. So as Poesy serveth and conferreth 'to Delectation, Magnanimity, and Morality; 'and therefore it may seem deservedly to have some 'Participation of Divineness, because it doth raise 'the Mind, and exalt the Spirit with high Raptures, 'by proportioning the Shews of Things to the Desires of the Mind; and not submitting the Mind 'to Things, as Reason and History do. And by 'these Allurements and Congruities, whereby it 'cherisheth the Soul of Man, joined also with 'Consort of Musick, whereby it may more sweetly insinuate it self; it hath won such Access, 'that it hath been in Estimation even in rude 'Times, and barbarous Nations, when other Learning stood excluded.

But there is nothing which favours and falls in with this natural Greatness and Dignity of human Nature so much as Religion, which does not only promise the entire Refinement of the Mind, but the glorifying of the Body, and the Immortality of both.

*** Whereas I am informed, That there is a spurious and very incorrect Edition of these Papers printed in a small Volume; These are to give Notice, That there is in the Press, and will speedily be published, a very neat Edition, fitted for the Pocket, on extraordinary good Paper, a new Brevier Letter, like the Elzevir Editions, and adorned with several Cuts by the best Artists. To which is added, a Preface, Index, and many Notes, for the better Explanation of these Lucubrations. By the Author. Who has revised, amended, and made many Additions to the Whole.

N. B. Notice shall be given in this Paper, when I conclude my First Volume.

Advertisements.

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*** **The Statutes at large, in Three Volumes; Wingate** and Washington's Abridgments, with a Supplement to them; Mr. Clutterbuck's Plain and Rational Vindication and Explanation of the Liturgy; Dr. Gibson on the Sacrament, at 1 l. 5 s. per Hundred; Winchester Manual; Bibles and Common Prayers of all Sorts, ruled or unruled; a fine Set of Cuts for the Common Prayer, engraved by Mr. Sturt; Dr. Nicolls's Paraphrase on the Common Prayer; the New Welch Common Prayer and Psalms, with or without Cuts; and Tate and Brady's Psalms, with the New Supplement; Bishop Beveridge's Catechism; Dr. Williams's Catechism; are sold by R. Whitledge, at the Bible and Ball in Ave-Mary-lane near Ludgate, at the lowest Prices.

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*** **The famous Medicine for curing the Cholick,** that has for some Time been sold by Mr. Rogers, Bookseller in Fleetstreet, at 2 s. and 6 d. the Paper, has lately cur'd a Gentlewoman near Tunbridge of above 70 Years old, who had been afflicted with that Distemper at Times for above 40 Years, and for above half a Year last past had it without any Intermission, as appears by a Letter from a Friend of the Gentlewoman's sent to Mr. Rogers, dated July 9. 1709. which is to be seen at his Shop by any one that desires it.

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